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## THE MICROSCOPIC METHOD APPLIED TO HISTORY <sup>1</sup>

MR. PRESIDENT, MEMBERS OF THE MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, LADIES, AND GENTLEMEN: The superintendent, in inviting me to address the society, suggested that I take some theme which would enable me to present the plans we have developed at Wisconsin for doing a certain portion of our work, and to exhibit somewhat the methods which we are following, or propose to follow, in accomplishing our aims.

The principal feature of our new activity in the Wisconsin Historical Society is the so-called "Wisconsin Domesday Book." Briefly defined, this is a plan by which it may be possible ultimately to prepare and publish, partly in the form of an atlas and partly in the form of text, the pioneer history of all the townships of Wisconsin. For the older counties we take the year 1860 as the normal year and call our plats "Farms and Farmers of 1860." For the newer counties of northern Wisconsin the year 1890 will be taken, and this will also be the date for the second cross-section study of the older counties, while 1920 will be taken uniformly all over the state for a final survey.

The unit in the "Domesday Book" work is the map of the township, or of the town, which usually occupies the area of the surveyor's township. There are several reasons for taking the township as the unit. One is that we have access to the original plats prepared by the surveyors, which are, as a rule, plats of townships six miles square, and contain some indications of the topography, such as the outlines of rivers, lakes, and to some extent marshes and hills, what might be called the hydrographic system. Secondly, the surveyors'

<sup>1</sup> An address read at the annual meeting of the Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, January 17, 1921.

descriptions of the land, the surface, the quality of the soil, the character of the timber, the trails, and similar features seen in running the lines are arranged by townships. This information is an important source from which to reconstruct the conditions under which the land was settled, and the data can be readily transcribed either to the margin of our township plat or to the text which is to supplement the plat. The tract-books preserved in the United States land offices and in the state land office contain the records of sales of lands to private individuals, also arranged by townships and sections. The same is true, usually, for the records of organized towns in Wisconsin, since these towns are, in at least ninety per cent of the cases, confined within the boundaries of congressional townships. If one is looking for town tax rolls in the county courthouses, the books containing them in most cases will contain data concerning the residents of a district thus delimited, arranged by sections from one to thirty-six. Similarly, the indexes of land titles and dates of purchase, for which we go to the offices of abstractors, are arranged by townships and sections. Thus, while in some of the other states it might prove more advantageous to carry on the work by taking the county as a unit, in Wisconsin the town or township is preferable. In addition to the reasons given above, the United States census — of which we have the original schedules for the seventh, eighth, and ninth (1850, 1860, and 1870) — is arranged by townships, except in those cases, pertaining mainly to the seventh census, in which it was found that there were a good many unorganized townships, when the arrangement was by districts.

What has already been said will indicate the principal features introduced into our plats. The first step is to prepare a transcript of the surveyor's original plat, giving the geography and topography of the township. Upon this plat are then inscribed the names of all farm landowners of the year 1860, with the outline of the holding of each clearly defined. There is also an indication of the date of acquisition of each separate

parcel or tract of land making up the individual farm, which enables the reader of the plat to determine instantly the progress of the pioneers in the acquisition of their lands. For example, on the plat of the town of Primrose, Josiah La Follette's farm consists of eleven forty-acre tracts, or 440 acres. Of these, four forties were bought in 1851, four in 1853, and three in 1854. In case the purchase was original — that is, if it consisted of an entry of government or state land — the fact is indicated by placing a star before the date. From the surveyor's notebook are transcribed all data relating to the description of the land — surface, soil, timber, et cetera — along the defined lines according to the survey. Finally, the census-taker's description of the farm as it was in 1860 (and also as it was in 1850 and 1870 if it was under the same ownership at those dates) is inscribed upon the area assigned to the given farm. This description, however, is limited to the following points: number of acres of improved land; number of acres of unimproved land; value, in dollars, of the land; value of the live stock and machinery combined; and the number of bushels of wheat produced during the previous year. Summaries of other census data are relegated to the text.

The plat itself, therefore, will reveal to the careful reader in outline the pioneer history of the particular township practically from its beginnings to the year 1870, so far as the creation of farms and their improvement is concerned. Since the making of homes on the land was the main feature of all pioneer history, the plat unaided will show how the pioneers of a particular area in Wisconsin subdued the wilderness and laid the social and economic foundations of the civilization of today.

This township plat, however, is only the starting-point in an historical inquiry which will cover a wide range of social, economic, religious, educational, and political facts relating to the area thus defined and mapped. The more detailed account of our plans for the study of these local areas will be taken up later.

There are three points of view from which this plan can be justified: (1) It recognizes that history is well fitted to interest large masses of people if rightly presented, that is, beginning with local and family matters; and it recognizes also the social value of a community background such as history alone can give. (2) It recognizes the desirability, from the standpoint of a state-wide organization, of enlisting the coöperation in historical work of the largest practicable fraction of the people. (3) It establishes the basis for an intensive study of history by localities, which is one sure mode of helping toward the interpretation of the general history of America. These three points will be examined in order.

According to the universal testimony of trained observers, the people generally are not historically minded. They are said to be more prone to act on hearsay or otherwise inferior evidence than to look for or wait for true evidence. It seems unnecessary to produce illustrations to substantiate this conclusion. But it is not so clear that, among the fairly well-educated classes of the community, this unfortunate attitude is due to inherent inability to reason historically. We know that in certain matters of great practical moment to all persons, nearly everybody is disposed to insist upon good evidence. For example, men and women may be incautious to the point of recklessness in purchasing such things as mining stocks; but no one will buy a piece of land without insisting upon actual records establishing the validity of title. In other relations also, such as determining questions of birth, marriage, and death, real evidence is commonly demanded. On account of the universal liability to jury service among men in the past (in the future it will mean both men and women) there is in every community a considerable group of persons more or less skilled in weighing evidence bearing upon cases like those tried in the courts. And we all know that the average man reasons with considerable precision and demands evidence that is genuine, not spurious, in matters which come within the habitual exercise of his business. Participation in

public affairs, local and general, is another means toward training in historical reasoning, at least outside of party politics. It is a safe conclusion that the average citizen is capable of developing historical-mindedness if he has it not. Most people reason critically in at least a few relations. The problem is to make such reasoning habitual instead of sporadic and occasional.

I believe that the best way to proceed in bringing about the change is to begin, wherever possible, with those interests which have already made to the people what amounts to a scientific appeal. Since certain classes of documents, like deeds to land, marriage certificates, records of births and deaths, and court records, are already universally respected, why not make these and other similar documents the starting-point in a series of inquiries calculated to arouse personal activity along historical lines on the part of numbers of our people? Is it not legitimate to look upon a state historical society as an agency for the education of the people in historical ways of thinking as well as an agency for the collection and preservation of the materials of history? Our experience shows that the people respond very well when the appeal comes through reference to personal, family, or local historical matters. We suggested recently a census of old homesteads, that is of farms at least sixty years old which are still in the hands of some member of the family of the pioneer farm-maker. Since the publication in the local newspapers of our request for information about such farms, no day, I think, has passed without bringing us letters from owners of old homesteads, who are glad to send such definite evidence as we require to prove the eligibility of their farms for inclusion in our prospective census. We have had a similar experience in calling the attention of persons working on the subject of early trails to the value of the evidence contained in surveyor's plats. Everybody respects official records concerning land sales, and we are, therefore, calling attention, through our history items prepared for the newspaper press and otherwise, to the value

of the land-office record of land sales as a means of determining approximately the dates of settlement of pioneers of given localities. The census schedules give the age, nationality, place of birth, and occupation of all residents of the state, and we find the people eager to make use of this exact information in order to determine appropriate questions. In a word, it seems not difficult to substitute in the popular mind a demand for better evidence in place of a willingness to accept inferior evidence. Success depends on whether or not the type of evidence proposed is distinctly in line with popular knowledge and occasional usage.

Inquiries like those suggested will reveal in the several localities some persons who, within their limits, are genuine historians. These can be set to work on special problems, and gradually the local historical activities will make the communities engaging in them conscious of their community life as a thing of three dimensions, not merely a matter of length and breadth. The historical backgrounds of the communities ought to become wells of inspiration for literature and art; the study of progress historically should inspire community ideals and reveal modes of advancement and improvement. A few localities in our state have to their credit notable literary or artistic productions. Brookfield, in Waukesha County, can boast Grant Showerman's *A Country Chronicle*; Onalaska, in La Crosse County, figures in Hamlin Garland's writings; two localities in Columbia County are the richer for John Muir's *Story of My Boyhood and Youth*. May we not hope that, by the coöperation of all appropriate agencies, such general historical interest can be aroused that, in the future, a goodly proportion of the two thousand townships of Wisconsin will contribute something to the world to enrich it, and at the same time provide enduring monuments to the communities themselves?

On the question of the desirability, from the standpoint of a state-wide organization, of securing the coöperation in historical work of as large a proportion of the people as possible,

argument is almost superfluous. A public organization, supported by public funds, can succeed only in so far as it demonstrates its value to the taxpayers. If a good share of the public become actual participants in the work planned by the organization, the organization itself is secure; otherwise, not. It goes without saying that local participation must be guided and controlled in the interest of scientific results.

A scheme like the "Wisconsin Domesday Book," which contemplates working out ultimately the history of every township in the state, takes possession of the public imagination in a way to yield very generous and genuine coöperation. This coöperation comes from local historical societies, from the press, from members of the state society everywhere, from the officers of counties and towns, from the county abstractors, from superintendents and principals of schools, and from many others. The work when completed will be the coöperative production of hundreds, or even thousands, of persons.

In the discussion of our plan thus far we have emphasized those values which attach to it as a means of stimulating interest in local history among all the people and of providing an historical background for their community life. These we deem very great, and an ample justification for the expenditures involved in its execution. But that is far from being the whole story. As stated above, our plan makes the basis for an intensive study of history by localities, each so small as to suggest in its study the analogy to the microscopic method so generally used in the natural sciences. This feature of our plan constitutes in many respects a departure, and it promises results of less or greater moment, depending on the insight, enthusiasm, and thoroughness with which it is carried out.

Sir John Lubbock, writing in 1881 of the advance of science, pays a tribute to the microscopic method as a prime agent of progress in the natural sciences during the previous fifty years. "One remarkable feature in the modern progress of biological science," he says, "has been the application of improved methods of observation and experiment; and the



employment in physiological research of the exact measurements employed by the experimental physicist. Our microscopes have been greatly improved: achromatic object-glasses were introduced by Lister in 1829; the binocular arrangement by Wenham in 1856; while immersion lenses, first suggested by Amici, and since carried out under the formula of Abbe, are most valuable. The use of chemical re-agents in microscopical investigations has proved most instructive, and another very important method of investigation has been the power of obtaining very thin slices by imbedding the objects in paraffin or some other soft substance. In this manner we can now obtain, say, fifty separate sections of the egg of a beetle, or the brain of a bee."

Huxley once remarked that "no delusion is greater than that method and industry can make up for mother wit, either in science or in practical life." It would be absurd to suppose that the science of chemistry could have become what it is from the simple ground-work prepared before 1800 by Priestly and Lavoisier, save for the devotion to that science of a series of great intellects — Faraday, Sir Humphrey Davy, Pasteur, Liebig, Bunsen, and Bosanquet — among the rest; that the history of geology can ever be divorced from the names of Hutton, Cuvier, Playfair, and William Smith, of Lyell, Suess, Chamberlin, and Gilbert; and it is impossible even to think of progress in the science of biology apart from the names of Darwin, Wallace, Huxley, and Agassiz. But these men were all masters of the scientific method; and their results, while constituting imperishable monuments to their personal greatness, celebrate likewise the "improved methods of observation and experiment" without which, in the presence of many of the problems now so fully solved, the human intellect must have stood helpless.

It is dangerous to press analogies, but for purposes of illustration something like the microscopic method of science can be applied to history. History, too, has had its periods of

advance, clearly marked by the adoption of new principles of methodology. If we were to single out the two principles which, applied in a variety of ways and by men of every grade of intellect, have been responsible for most of the progress since Herodotus, they would be, I think, (a) actuality of the evidence, and (b) adequacy of the evidence. In the history of history-writing the principle that only actual evidence should be employed was reached by the genius of Thucydides, partly from the fact that he dealt with a contemporaneous problem and extracted his facts from living witnesses. It has been none too easy to maintain that principle, obvious as it is. As to the second, if we are to believe critics and reviewers, very few writers up to now have used it.

Of course that is an exaggeration. Yet, it is true that the works of the world's great historians are nearly all obsolete, and the reason is found in the inadequacy of their evidence — their documents. Sometimes the necessary documents did not exist. Oftener the writer's conception of his problem was such that he utilized only a portion of the documents which were available. Everything turns on the author's insight or his point of view. He may be inclined toward biography and neglect politics; he may stress religious data and omit commerce. Or he may be assiduous in collecting military facts and forget that industry conditions wars. To a Bancroft certain actual documents bearing on the revolutionary rising in the colonies seem adequate to explain the revolution as Bancroft conceived it; to a Channing those documents, and a thousand more, make the basis for a much less dogmatic but far truer account of how the colonists rose in arms against England. A Roosevelt, with a small quantity of unimpeachable documents at his command, will interpret the history of the West in terms largely of its battles and leaders; a Turner, sitting in the midst of a Draper Collection, will interpret it in terms of a specialized frontier psychology, the product of frontier conditions of life. Every researcher detects in his

evidence those things which his mind is prepared to see. Other things he overlooks; and he looks for the kind and quantity of evidence which his theory of the problem confronting him demands. Accordingly, if he wishes to narrate the story of some conspicuous monarch, some general, some great statesman, in a way to emphasize its spectacular features, he will require a certain type of evidence to produce a satisfactory result, as well as a certain literary style. If his aim is to explain the leading features of such a story, or to interpret rather than to narrate, he will require a very different evidential equipment.

The crucial need in historical activity at the present time is a thoroughgoing, far-reaching process of interpretation that shall ultimately bring the world's historical knowledge within manageable compass. Publication along historical lines has gone forward at so stupendous a rate that no reader, however voracious, could possibly have kept pace with it. Carlyle once wrote that a tongue of average velocity could publish at the rate of a stout volume per day; but he added that, fortunately, most of what was uttered by most tongues, voluble and otherwise, was lost to history. Since his time, the machinery for conserving and utilizing material once uttered has been so improved that a much higher percentage of it finds its way into the permanent record. He would be a heroic reader who should undertake to cover, in a single lifetime, the published works bearing upon the World War, to say nothing of what has been published on all the history of the world preceding it.

The fact is, historical thinkers are laboring under a plethora of material, such as it is, and this explains why, in so many cases, they get a false perspective on events. They "cannot see the woods because of the trees." And if the professed historian is a man buried under a mountain of books and finds it impossible to work his way to the surface, the nonprofessional reader and would-be user of history, when he deals with historical materials or reasons from supposed historical facts, is, of course, utterly helpless. These conditions are

beginning to be recognized, and in recent publications we observe a distinct tendency, on the part of some writers, to aim at interpretative rather than narrative history. The difference between the two types mentioned is the difference between a Macaulay's history of England, in five stout volumes, which covers the events of about fifteen years, and a Farland's history of the United States, in one modest volume, covering the events of a period twenty times as great.

It is true that much invaluable interpretative history was produced from time to time during the period of the most rapid multiplication of historical publications. Every well-informed student of history realizes that the great advances which have been made from time to time toward the understanding of great sections of the historical field are due, in each case, to someone who succeeded in giving a new impetus to historical study by arriving at a new interpretation. Institutional history in Europe is a good illustration. It was great scholars like Fustel de Coulanges in Belgium, Thudichum in Germany, Bishop Stubbs in England, and others, whose patient, minute, and painstaking researches within restricted fields are mainly responsible for the results. In American historiography the last thirty years have witnessed an extraordinary shifting of the emphasis from the more exalted phase of political history, coupled with the history of military affairs, to the investigation and explanation of the economic and social life of the people. No one any longer writes American history as George Bancroft wrote it. No one today pretends to teach the history of the United States, even to grade school pupils, without paying some attention to the everyday homely life of men and women in every period, which, as we now see, influenced powerfully not merely local politics but state politics, national politics, and world politics as well.

Corresponding to the change just noted, there has been a change in the character of the materials out of which history has been constructed. To a Bancroft the writings of generals and of presidents and of cabinet members, together with the

records of the United States Congress and the records of the revolutionary state governments, constitute the stuff of history. To a present-day historian such materials are still valuable, but they must be supplemented by other material laboriously gleaned from the governmental departments, the administrative offices of the states, the records of counties, the business ledgers of plantation owners or of merchants, and multitudinous typical utterances of plain men and women.

The effect of the changed attitude of American historians upon the responsibility of the reader who aims to keep up with historical writing is marked. Time was when it would have been necessary to read some scores of volumes in order to know what had been said upon the slavery question. Today, since the epoch-making local researches of Professor Phillips, it is necessary only to read a volume. And, whereas the reader of twenty years ago, after reading all that was available, would still have been in the dark as to many vitally important points bearing upon the subject, the present-day reader comes away from his volume with the conviction that he understands what took place. A minute, careful, intensive study — in effect, a microscopic study — of the slavery question from the standpoints of its social and economic factors has yielded this new and superlatively desirable result. And just as the old South has come to be understood through such studies, so the new West has come to be understood through the more notable researches of Professor Turner, whose “*Significance of the Frontier*,” published less than thirty years ago, was in fact the starting-point for a revision of American history as a whole.

In a recent address, Professor Turner told how he and a few other graduate students of history at Johns Hopkins were incited to undertake what were regarded at the time as rather revolutionary studies, by a remark of Herbert B. Adams that the field of American history had then (about 1888) been practically exhausted, and that historians of the future would

be well advised to devote their energies to European history. A generation has passed, and historical activity on the American theater has been more intense than ever. But would anyone make a similar assertion today, after all that has been done in the interim? The American field, we perceive, is not even yet "exhausted." On the contrary, new vistas are constantly opening to the inventive and thoughtful student, and especially new opportunities to make studies from new points of departure that shall help to simplify American history by interpreting portions of it aright. Personally, I believe that one of these opportunities lies in the minute study of areas so small as to bring into the focus of the investigator the actual social cell life, the individual men and women who compose the average American community. Our plan, as has been said, takes the organized town, usually within the limits of a surveyor's township of six miles square, as the typical area. And within that area it aims to give the student a glimpse at least of the individual settler and of his family.

About the results of investigations which will be made on this new local basis, we can as yet only prophecy, save that we have many encouraging analogies. We know what Thudichum learned from the study of the Wetterau district; what light has been shed on general history by studies of a single monastery or a given manor whose records happened to be preserved or the gild of a single town. Such studies have remade history in the older world, because they revealed the typical life forces and their modes of operation — a kind of social circulation of the blood, or play of the gastric juice. And, as the biologist obtains his results by making "fifty separate sections of the egg of a beetle, or the brain of a bee," so our method of cutting up our state into two thousand minute portions and putting each under the lens ought to yield results also. It should prove possible to learn something about the origins of social forces that modify history and to gauge their strength under varying conditions. We may even hope to learn how beneficial social or economic tendencies

are promoted and what prophylaxis nature provides against tendencies which are socially untoward.

To illustrate, let us take the subjects of immigration and emigration, heretofore treated "by and large" but never on the basis of the study of numerous individual cases. Our plat shows who lived in the given town in 1860, and the dates of their purchases of land. The census will tell where the people were born. In some cases county histories give brief biographies of early settlers, which will help, but with the aid of local agencies it will not be difficult to learn in most cases where the pioneers came from, what caused them to emigrate from their former homes, why they selected this township as a new home, and what were the special conditions surrounding the early home here. A valuable fund of such material is drifting in constantly, with no special effort on our part, in connection with our census of old homesteads. The character of the incoming settlers at different epochs will be an interesting fact to ascertain because it will throw light on the problem of assimilation. A still more valuable study, because a potentially more complete one, can be made of the conditions causing emigration from the town at various times. The process will be found going on in every period from the first settlement. But there will be years, or successions of years, when emigrating activity will be especially great. like 1849-50, the years following the Civil War, the era of the early eighties when the movement to Dakota was at its height, and the more recent period with its rush to the cities as well as into the West. By taking another cross section at the year 1890 and a third at 1920 we divide the history of the settlement approximately into generations, and we can follow the process of migration from the beginning to the present.

Queries like the following will arise: How far was the emigration of a given family, once settled here, due to purely personal motives—like the desire to wander or (to use a phrase rendered historical by Thomas Hooker in speaking of

the emigrants to Connecticut) "the strong bent of their spirits to go thither"? How far was it due to social considerations which made the family's continuance in this community undesirable; how far was it due to social attractions elsewhere, like the presence of friends or relatives in the region to which the family emigrated? How far was it due to economic causes, and what were those causes? Did they move because the land in their farm was poor or insufficient to enable them to keep abreast socially of more fortunate neighbors who had secured better or larger tracts — because, like Dick Garland, they "were crowded against the hills"? Was the change prompted by the opportunity to sell at an advantageous price, the desire to get out of ordinary farming and to assume a new role as western wheat-growers or cattle-ranchers, or the desire to go into some other line of business? By comparison of results from the study of several towns or a number of towns somewhat differently circumstanced, it will also be possible to determine how far, in some cases, emigration was prevented or held back by features of the social organization, such as good schools, churches, literary clubs, or neighborhood sociability; also, how far economic reorganization — the adoption of new agricultural methods (for example, coöperative dairying) — stopped the process of emigration and gave stability to the community, making even the owners of the smaller and poorer farms satisfied to remain.

Of special interest will be the inquiry as to how the emigrating family prospered in the new home. Was it able to raise its relative social status? If it improved its condition on a new frontier, has that relative improvement been maintained under maturer social and economic conditions? In the making of America, under the régime of free lands or cheap lands, no principle is more significant than that the frontier always offered "another chance" to the unfortunate or the unprosperous. We have come to take it for granted that the resultant American population, from that fact, is far superior to



what it otherwise would be. Yet, this generalization is questioned today, especially by certain prominent economists, and I fear the historians are not prepared with complete data to maintain their contention. Local studies which would follow the fortunes of emigrating families are needed to clear up the question.

Associated with the problem of emigration, is the following question in agricultural history: Who, locally, has been responsible for introducing improvements in farming? Has it been the owners of the big farms or the owners of the little farms? Has necessity been "the mother of invention," or have changes come about through outside leadership?

Our plan will make possible a test of the efficiency of local institutions and will reveal the conditions of efficiency. Taking the question of education, for example, we shall be able to make an actual, first-hand study of the results of school training (coupled with the other educational agencies of the locality, including the apprenticeship of children to the trades of farming and housekeeping) in the character and efficiency of the younger generation. The inquiries that suggest themselves are endless. What proportion of the children educated under a given set of conditions turned out to be successful men and women on the local plane; what proportion succeeded in professional or industrial life abroad? Was it the local school, or some other local influence, which stimulated the genius of that boy or girl who has risen to fame in the literary or artistic world? Such and such a proportion of the pupils of X district ultimately went to college. Query: Why was the proportion from Y district so much lower? Through a comparison of the results of the study of education in a number of townships over a considerable period of time, it ought to be possible to arrive at some rational notion as to what constitutes a good school. In the present agitation of the educational problem, such a result would be at least not uninteresting.

Another topic that will occur to anyone who considers the plan is the history of religion and, associated with it, the history of morals. Let one propound to himself the query, "Does morality depend upon the religious sanction?" and it will at once appear how serviceable these local studies might become. The history of local politics will throw much light on general politics. "I should make," says Professor Turner, "in selected areas, detailed study of the correlations between party votes, by precincts, wards, etc., soils, nationalities and state-origins of the voter, assessment rolls, denominational groups, illiteracy, etc. What kind of people tend to be Whigs, what Democrats, or Abolitionists, or Prohibitionists, etc.? This can be ascertained by such studies, and it would be the first time such correlations have been worked out on any considerable scale." Perhaps the closest analogues to our surveyor's plats among present-day European devices are the ground charts (*grundkarten*), so extensively used in some countries. Professor Lamprecht, in summarizing the advantages of these, says, after speaking of their utility in a variety of historical enterprises: "The most general significance of ground charts one will have to look for in this, that they introduce the geographical *moment*, in every acceptation of that term, into the historical investigation."<sup>2</sup> That is the theoretical form of what Professor Turner expresses so well in concrete terms.

It may be objected that much of what has been suggested above smacks of either economics or sociology. The answer is, if this be sociology, make the most of it. Economics and sociology are, to a very large extent, applied history. Has not the student of history a right to make his own applications of the results which his studies reveal, provided he is equipped for social or economic reasoning? Whether the historian makes the applications or not, his results must be in such form as to enable the students of modern progress to apply them.

<sup>2</sup> "Zur Organization des Grundkartenforschung," in *Deutsche Geschichtsblätter*, vol. I, no. 2 (November, 1899).

Speaking modestly, and subject to correction, I believe that a large part of the inconclusive reasoning to be found in many treatises on economics, sociology, and political science is due to the incompleteness and inconclusiveness of the work of historians which must necessarily underlie such reasoning. The more thoroughgoing and accurate the interpretation of history can be made, the simpler will be the problem of charting the course along which society is to move in the future.

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